



U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management

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Rock Springs District Office

May 1993



# Wild Horse Gathering Inside and Outside Wild Horse Herd Management Areas July 1993 through April 1994



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The Bureau of Land Management is responsible for the balanced management of the public lands and resources and their various values so that they are considered in a combination that will best serve the needs of the American people. Management is based upon the principles of multiple use and sustained yield; a combination of uses that take into account the long-term needs of future generations for renewable and nonrenewable resources. These resources include recreation, range, timber, minerals, watershed, fish and wildlife, wilderness, and natural, scenic, scientific, and cultural values.

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**EA Number WY-048-EA93-87**



# United States Department of the Interior

## BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT

Rock Springs District Office  
P.O. Box 1869  
Rock Springs, Wyoming 82902-1869



1792 (420)  
4710

MAY 19 1993

Dear Reader:

The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA), Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) and Decision Record (DR) describes the Bureau of Land Management's decision for gathering wild horses in the Great Divide Basin, White Mountain, and Salt Wells Creek Wild Horse Herd Management Areas and for gathering wild horses outside the herd management areas (Firehole, Little Colorado, North Baxter/Jack Morrow, and in the Pinedale Resource Area). The decision is based on the enclosed EA and FONSI.

This EA, FONSI, and DR are being distributed to the public. The EA and FONSI are not being made available for a 30-day public comment period. The reason for this is that BLM feels there are no unresolved conflicts. Conflicts and issues that had existed (1990 and 1991) have all been resolved through the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) Orders of July 27, 1990, and February 22, 1991. Also, the public meeting and hearing held March 11, 1993, in Rock Springs did not provide new information, issues, or concerns. The Decision Record, however, is subject to appeal as provided in 43 CFR 4770.3 and 43 CFR 4.4.

The enclosed EA and FONSI serve as the basis for the decision and for complying with the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969. The action is in conformance with existing land use plans.

The EA, FONSI, and DR are available at Green River Resource Area Office and the Rock Springs District Office in Rock Springs, and in the Wyoming State Office in Cheyenne.

If you have any questions, please contact Jack Steinbrech at (307) 382-5350 or Thor Stephenson at (307) 362-6422.

Sincerely,

District Manager

Enclosure

**DECISION RECORD  
AND  
FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**WILD HORSE GATHERING  
INSIDE WILD HORSE HERD MANAGEMENT AREAS  
(Great Divide Basin, White Mountain, and Salt Wells Creek)  
AND  
OUTSIDE WILD HORSE HERD MANAGEMENT AREAS**

**JULY 1992 THROUGH APRIL 1993**

**EA Number WY-048-EA3-87**

**Decision**

It is my decision to approve the Proposed Action as described in the attached environmental assessment. This means, between July 1993 and April 1994, BLM will gather within the Rock Springs District between 352 and 746 wild horses from the White Mountain, Great Divide Basin, and Salt Wells Creek Wild Horse Herd Management Areas (HMA's), and gather from outside herd management areas approximately 24 wild horses from the Firehole area, approximately 142 from the North Baxter/Jack Morrow area, and approximately 18 wild horses from the Pinedale Resource Area. Because the Firehole and North Baxter/Jack Morrow areas and the Pinedale Resource Area are not within established herd management areas, all wild horses in these areas are considered excess and subject to removal. Between 38 and 69 excess wild horses would be removed from the Little Colorado area. This would leave wild horse populations in compliance with the 1981 District Court Order.

Wild horses above the Appropriate Management Levels (AMLs) established in existing land use plans will be considered excess and subject to gathering. The BLM will continue to monitor wild horse numbers, utilization, and range condition to achieve the multiple use objectives in the grazing allotments in the herd management areas.

The horses will be gathered according to the Capture Plan (Appendix A) analyzed in the EA. Gathering will involve the use of a helicopter to assist in gathering operations. The horses will be transported to the central holding facility in Rock Springs. Gathering operations are scheduled to begin approximately July 08, 1993, after the normal peak foaling period.

If you wish to appeal this decision, as provided by 43 CFR 4770.3 and 43 CFR 4.4, you must file an appeal in writing within 30 days of this decision with the District Manager, Rock Springs District Office, P.O. Box 1869, Rock Springs, Wyoming 82902-1869. The appeal shall state clearly and concisely why you think the decision is in error.

**Finding of No Significant Impact**

Based on the environmental analysis in the attached EA, I have determined that the impacts to the quality of the human environment are not expected to be significant. Therefore, an environmental impact statement is not necessary.

## **Rationale for Decision**

The portions of the decision covering gathering in areas outside wild horse herd management areas are in accordance with 43 CFR 4710.4, which states, in part, that "management of wild horses and burros shall be undertaken with the objective of limiting the animal's distribution to herd areas." Existing land use plans do not provide for maintaining populations of wild horses in the Firehole, North Baxter/Jack Morrow, and Little Colorado areas, or in the Pinedale Resource Area. Wild horses which stray from herd management areas are considered excess and are subject to gathering. Gathering wild horses in these areas is in conformance with existing land use plans and in compliance with the District Court Order.

All horses will be removed from the Firehole and North Baxter/Jack Morrow areas and from the Pinedale Resource Area. A population of from 69 to 100 wild horses will be maintained in the Little Colorado area, pending a decision in the Green River Resource Area Resource Management Plan concerning whether to establish a new herd management area in the Little Colorado area.

During the March 11, 1993 public meeting/hearing on the wild horse gathering program and the use of helicopters for gathering, no substantive reasons were provided for why gathering should not occur during the 1993-94 gathering period as described and analyzed in the EA. No comments were received that provided new information that would require further analysis or that indicated that the decision to follow the Capture Plan and use helicopters in gathering operations should be changed. In the Rock Springs District, helicopters have been used in wild horse gathering operations for the past several years, with minimal adverse impacts.

The January/February 1993 wild horse inventories and the projected post-1993 foaling populations indicate that wild horse numbers in the White Mountain, Great Divide Basin, and Salt Wells Creek herd management areas are above the AMLs established in the 1981 District Court Order. For this reason, all horses above the AMLs in the three herd management areas are considered excess and subject to gathering.

Gathering operations are scheduled to begin approximately July 08, 1993, after the normal peak foaling period. Starting at this time will also minimize potential adverse impacts to the horses by gathering too soon after the foaling period.

Based on the analysis in the EA, the impacts to the wild horses and to other resources would not be significant. The horses would be treated in a safe and humane manner. Safety risks to people involved in gathering operations would be minimized.

A February 22, 1991, decision by the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA) on the BLM 1990 wild horse gathering proposals pointed out the importance of the District Court Order in setting the AMLs on checkerboard lands and in designing gathering plans to implement the District Court Order on both checkerboard lands and solid block public lands. This decision is in compliance with the District Court Order.

  
District Manager  
Rock Springs District

5-19-93  
Date

**ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

**WILD HORSE GATHERING  
INSIDE WILD HORSE HERD MANAGEMENT AREAS  
(Great Divide Basin, White Mountain, and Salt Wells Creek)  
AND  
OUTSIDE WILD HORSE HERD MANAGEMENT AREAS  
JULY 1993 THROUGH APRIL 1994**

**EA Number WY-048-EA3-87**

**BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
ROCK SPRINGS DISTRICT, WYOMING**

**May 1993**

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## CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION

### A. PURPOSE OF AND NEED FOR THE ACTION

The Proposed Action is to gather "excess" wild horses from the Great Divide Basin, White Mountain, and Salt Wells Creek wild horse herd management areas in the BLM Rock Springs District, Wyoming and from the four areas outside the herd management areas (the Pinedale Resource Area, Firehole, North Baxter/Jack Morrow, and Little Colorado Desert). The action would be implemented in the Green River and Pinedale Resource Areas (Rock Springs District) under the authority of the Wild Horse and Burro Management Act of 1971. The Capture Plan (Appendix A) and Environmental Assessment (EA) cover the three herd management areas and the four areas outside herd management areas.

The purpose of gathering wild horses (Proposed Action) is to prevent damage to resources on public and private lands that may be caused by "excess" numbers of wild horses within herd management areas and by horses that have strayed outside the herd management areas. Gathering operations from July 1993 through April 1994 will comply with a 1981 District Court Order (see Chapters II and V of this EA) which, in part, limited wild horse numbers to a level agreed to with private landowners, preventing damage to private lands, as well as public lands.

A March 13, 1981, Order from the District Court of Wyoming (Mountain States Legal Foundation and Rock Springs Grazing Association *vs.* Cecil Andrus, C79-275K) required BLM to "remove all wild horses from the checkerboard grazing lands in the Rock Springs District except that number which the Rock Springs Grazing Association (RSGA) voluntarily agrees to leave in said area." The Rock Springs Grazing Association is a major private landowner in the area. The BLM reviewed the numbers recommended by the RSGA and, through the planning process, based appropriate management levels (AMLs) in the three herd management areas on those numbers.

Wild horses are managed to maintain populations within a range of numbers to maintain a viable herd, with a single number AML within the range. Table 1 shows the range of wild horse numbers, the AML, and the existing population for each herd management area. The range of numbers for each herd management area was determined assuming (1) a maximum number of wild horses for the herd management area, (2) gathering every other year, and (3) a 20 percent annual increase in population.

For analysis purposes in this EA, the number of excess wild horses subject to gathering in each herd management area (Table 1, Summer 1993 Excess Horses) was calculated from the low and high ranges of the AML to maintain wild horse populations in compliance with the District Court Order and in conformance with existing land use plans. The lower number of horses that would be gathered in each herd management area is based on the difference between the projected summer population (post foaling) and the AML. The higher number is based on the difference between the projected summer population (assuming a 20 percent increase after foaling) and the low range of the AML.

**TABLE 1**  
**WILD HORSE POPULATIONS AND APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT LEVELS**

| Area                                 | AML<br>(Range)   | Current<br>Population | Excess<br>Horses | Projected<br>Post-1993<br>Foaling<br>Population | Summer<br>1993<br>Excess<br>Horses | Excess<br>Horses<br>Removal<br>Range |
|--------------------------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Great Divide<br>Basin WHHMA          | 500<br>(415-600) | 519                   | 19               | 623                                             | 123                                | 23-208                               |
| White<br>Mountain WHHMA              | 250<br>(205-300) | 299                   | 49               | 359                                             | 109                                | 59-154                               |
| Salt Wells<br>Creek WHHMA            | 365<br>(251-365) | 529                   | 164              | 635                                             | 270                                | 270-384                              |
| Firehole Area                        | 0                | 20                    | 20               | 24                                              | 24                                 | 20-24                                |
| North Baxter/<br>Jack Morrow         | 0                | 118                   | 118              | 142                                             | 142                                | 118-142                              |
| Pinedale RA                          | 0                | 15                    | 15               | 18                                              | 18                                 | 15-18                                |
| Little Colorado<br>Area <sup>1</sup> | 0                | 115                   | 15-46            | 138                                             | 69                                 | 38-69                                |

<sup>1</sup>No appropriate management level (AML) has been established for the Little Colorado Area pending completion of the Green River Resource Management Plan. Wild horse numbers would be allowed to range from 69 to 100 head, in conformance with the 1981 District Court order. The maximum number of excess wild horses (69) is computed based on the difference between the projected population (138) and the lower end of the allowable range (69). The lower number of excess wild horses (38) is based on the difference between the projected population and the higher end of the range (100).

## **B. CONFORMANCE WITH LAND USE PLANS**

The gathering and processing of wild horses from the three herd management areas, from the Firehole, North Baxter/Jack Morrow, and Little Colorado areas, and the Pinedale Resource Area are in conformance with the 1982 Big Sandy and Salt Wells Management Framework Plans. These plans cover the two former resource areas which now comprise the Green River Resource Area.

Wild horse numbers that were agreed to with private landowners were addressed in developing the two plans. Gathering wild horses from the Pinedale Resource Area is in conformance with the Pinedale Resource Management Plan (RMP). The Pinedale RMP determined that the portion of the South Desert - Figure Four herd management area in the Pinedale Resource Area (South Desert Pasture of the Desert Common Allotment) should not be managed as a herd management area. Subsequent re-evaluation of that decision (September 1990) found that the decision to eliminate the herd management area should not be changed.

While the Little Colorado area (Green River Resource Area) is not in a herd management area, part of the former South Desert - Figure Four wild horse herd management area (Figure Four Allotment) is in the Little Colorado area. Previous evaluation found that this herd management area could not maintain a viable population of wild horses in an ecological balance. However, the Big Sandy MFP provided for a population of 75 wild horses in the area (an additional 25 wild horses would be maintained in the South Desert Pasture as part of the herd management area). Up to 100 wild horses would be allowed to remain in the area, pending completion of the Green River RMP and a decision on whether a population of wild horses could be maintained and where. The number of wild horses would range from 69 to 100 head. This is in conformance with the Big Sandy MFP and the District Court Order.

The Firehole and North Baxter/Jack Morrow areas are not in wild horse herd management areas. Therefore, all wild horses in these areas are considered excess and subject to removal. Removing all wild horses from these areas is in conformance with existing land use plans.

#### **C. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER STATUTES, REGULATIONS, OR OTHER PLANS**

No other Federal, State, or local plans would be affected by the Proposed Action. No other permits or authorizing actions are required prior to implementing the Proposed Action. A public hearing on the use of helicopters in gathering operations was held on March 11, 1993, in Rock Springs.

#### **D. POLICY**

The BLM's policy (43 CFR 4700.06) regarding wild horse management is to: "protect, manage, and control wild horses and burros on public lands as an integral part of the public lands ecosystem. ... Wild horse and burro ranges shall be designated when it is determined to be in the public interest to manage the herd management areas principally, but not exclusively, for wild horses and burros. ... Remove excess wild horses and burros from public lands and maintain a thriving ecological balance and multiple-use relationship. Priority shall be given to removing wild horses and burros from private land when the landowner submits a written request to BLM for their removal." The wild horse herd management areas in the Rock Springs District were established through the planning process.

The BLM manages wild horse populations in areas where they are best adapted for the good of both the horses and the range. For example, human-made hazards are minimized in areas where wild horse populations are maintained. When wild horse herd management areas are established, wild horse management focuses on keeping wild horses inside the herd management area and on managing the horses within specified numbers. When numbers rise beyond certain levels, population pressures increase instances where the horses move outside the boundaries of the herd management areas.

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## CHAPTER II - PROPOSED ACTION AND ALTERNATIVES

### A. PROPOSED ACTION

#### 1. Introduction

The Proposed Action is to gather excess wild horses in the Rock Springs District from *inside* three wild horse herd management areas (i.e., White Mountain, Great Divide Basin and Salt Wells Creek) and from four areas *outside* wild horse herd management areas (i.e., Pinedale Resource Area, Firehole, North Baxter/Jack Morrow and Little Colorado). Gathering in these areas, under the Capture Plan in Appendix A, would resume in July 1993. After gathering, wild horses would be transported in a safe and humane manner to the central holding facility.

Wild horse gathering plans are based the number of wild horses in a herd management area, compared to the appropriate management level (AML) for that herd management area. While the AML appears as a single number, in practice it is a range of numbers. Table 1 shows the AMLs, as well as the range for the herd management areas. Except for the Little Colorado interim management area, there is no AML for areas outside herd management areas because they are intended to be horse-free areas in conformance with existing land use plans.

The AMLs for the three herd management areas in the Green River Resource Area were based on a 1981 court decision which took into account the rights of private landowners (see explanation in this chapter and in Chapter V of this EA). The "excess" number of wild horses are subject to gathering. Wild horse gathering has been going on in the District since 1975. The BLM has been conducting rangeland monitoring on portions of these herd management areas, and BLM plans to continue and increase monitoring efforts over the next few years. The BLM annually inventories wild horse populations throughout the District.

The AML used to calculate the horses to be gathered in 1993/1994 for the White Mountain and Great Divide Basin herd management areas is a single number near the middle of the range. The upper end of the range is the number of wild horses allowed under the District Court Order. The upper end assumes a 20 percent increase from existing populations after 1993 foaling. The lower end of the range in the three areas is based on the February 1993 inventory.

For the Salt Wells Creek herd management area, the upper end of the range is both the AML and the number of wild horses allowed under the District Court Order.

It is estimated the July 1993 through April 1994 wild horse gathering operations would remove between 352 and 746 excess wild horses from the three wild horse herd management areas (Table 1). This would leave wild horse populations in compliance with the 1981 District Court Order.

Removal of wild horses from inside the herd management areas would be:

- 23 to 208 wild horses would be removed from the Great Divide Basin herd management area;
- 59 to 154 wild horses would be removed from the White Mountain herd management area;
- 270 to 384 wild horses would be removed from the Salt Wells Creek herd management area.

Removal of wild horses from outside the herd management areas would be:

- 15 to 18 wild horses from the Pinedale Resource Area;
- 20 to 24 wild horses from the Firehole area;
- 118 to 142 wild horses from the North Baxter/Jack Morrow area;
- 38 to 69 wild horses from the Little Colorado area.

Because the Pinedale Resource Area, Firehole and North Baxter/Jack Morrow areas are not wild horse herd management areas, all wild horses in these areas are considered excess, and are subject to removal.

The Little Colorado area is not in a wild horse herd management area. However, a population of wild horses will be maintained there, pending a decision in the Green River Resource Management Plan. A population of between 69 and 100 wild horses would be maintained in the Little Colorado area.

The number of excess wild horses that would be subject to gathering, beginning in July 1993, depends in part on the number of excess wild horses gathered during Spring 1993 gathering operations. The estimates for number of excess wild horses subject to gathering (July 1993 through April 1994), can generally be reduced by the number gathered during the Spring of 1993.

The number of excess wild horses gathered during Spring 1993, both inside and outside herd management areas, was 61 wild horses. The EA and gathering plan for 1992-93 covered the impacts of gathering the 61 excess wild horses in the Spring (March) of 1993.

The procedures described in Appendix A may be used to gather and remove wild horses from private lands at the request of the landowner. Section 4 of the Act states: "if wild and free roaming horses or burros stray from public lands onto privately owned land, the owners of such land may inform the nearest Federal marshal or agent of the Secretary, who shall arrange to have the animals removed."

A monitoring program is being developed to provide information to support wild horse management decisions. This information will help to set priorities for determining where gathering is most needed to achieve a thriving ecological balance. The monitoring will be coordinated with the Range Management Program and will follow guidelines in BLM Manual Handbook H-4423-1.

The District has a large acreage of "checkerboard lands." These alternating sections of public and private land look like a checkerboard on maps using different colors to show land ownership.

Map 1 shows the location of wild horse herd management areas. The Firehole area is along the Green River south of the White Mountain herd management area and west of the Salt Wells Creek herd management area. The North Baxter/Jack Morrow area is bounded on the west by Highway 191 and on the east by the western boundary of the Great Divide Basin herd management area. The herd management areas include the Adobe Town herd management area (primarily in the Rawlins District but partly in the Rock Springs District) which is not covered by this EA. Part of the District's wild horse population is maintained in the Adobe Town herd management area.

# MAP 1

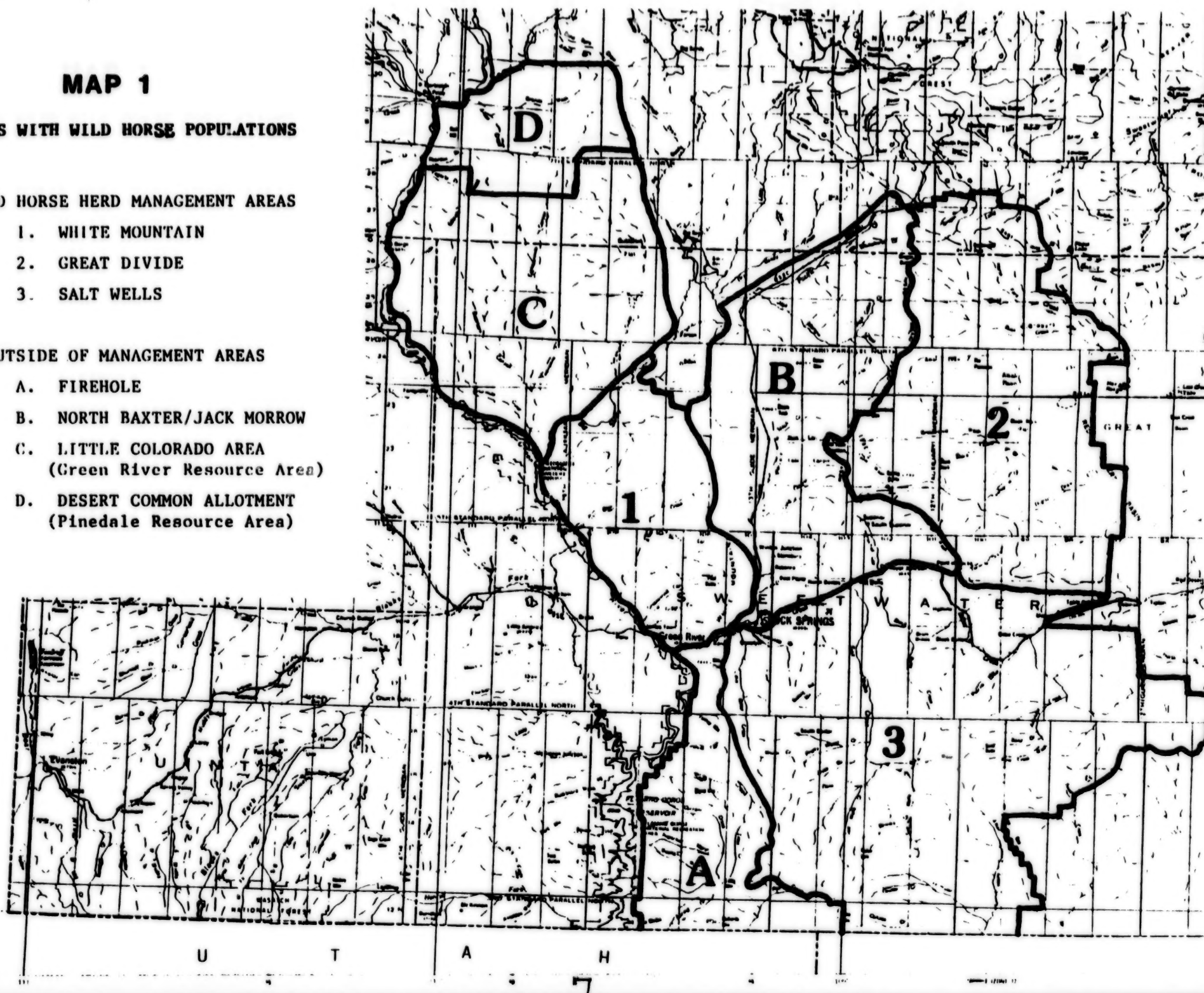
## AREAS WITH WILD HORSE POPULATIONS

### WILD HORSE HERD MANAGEMENT AREAS

1. WHITE MOUNTAIN
2. GREAT DIVIDE
3. SALT WELLS

### OUTSIDE OF MANAGEMENT AREAS

- A. FIREHOLE
- B. NORTH BAXTER/JACK MORROW
- C. LITTLE COLORADO AREA  
(Green River Resource Area)
- D. DESERT COMMON ALLOTMENT  
(Pinedale Resource Area)



## **2. Capture and Removal Operations**

The Capture Plan (Appendix A) covers capture methods, location, and number of animals involved. It covers procedures to minimize stress to the horses during capture, transportation, and possible need for humane destruction of old, sick, lame, or injured animals. Often helicopters are used in capture operations. However, a helicopter is not used during the time immediately surrounding the peak foaling period.

### **a. Herding**

Herding would be done using a helicopter. Helicopter payment would not be based on gathering speed or on the number of horses gathered per day. Animal welfare will have priority over these types of factors. Three to four wranglers would be on horseback at each trap. Working as a team, the helicopter would guide the wild horses into the wings of the trap, or as close to the wings as possible. Then, wranglers get behind the horses and chase them into the trap with the aid of the helicopter. The wings of the traps would be 100 to 200 yards long and 100 yards or wider apart.

Horses would not be herded over a 7-mile distance from the trap. The horses would be moved at their own pace, to within 1/4 mile of the trap. At this point, the speed of herding would be increased by the wranglers. The number of gathering runs per day would depend on the numbers of horses in the individual bands. Bands generally average about 15 head.

Colts and mothers occasionally become separated or escape during capture. The escaped mother or colt would be roped to keep the colt from being orphaned. Only horses that must be captured individually would be roped.

### **b. Transportation**

The number of horses captured in any one day would not exceed the number (generally 45 to 50 head) that can be transported to the central holding facility in Rock Springs. No wild horses would be left at a trap overnight.

Wild horses would not be loaded tightly into the trucks for transport. Generally, a maximum would be 10 horses per compartment in a semi-trailer and 14 on a stock truck. This would allow for movement and allows an animal which may go down adequate room to regain its footing.

### **c. Traps**

Steel corral panels (portable) would be used to erect a basic three-pen trap. These panels are six feet high. Pens would hold up to 20 horses each. Generally, a 6-panel pen would be used to contain the horses.

Steel posts and jute matting would be used for the wings of the trap, usually two wings per trap. The steel posts would be six feet above ground, spaced approximately 15 to 20 feet apart. The jute matting is hung over the posts to provide a visible barrier. No wire would be used, except when an existing fence is used as one of the wings.

A Powder River type loading chute would be used on all loading operations.

d. **Branded and Claimed Horses**

Branded and claimed horses would be transported to the central holding facility. The State Brand Inspector would determine the owner(s) and would make arrangements to return the animals or to dispose of them under State of Wyoming estray laws.

e. **Destruction of Animals**

Any wild horse requiring destruction, as determined by the Officer in charge, would be destroyed immediately using the most humane method, generally one 30-caliber bullet to the brain. The remains would be disposed of as required by State and local authorities.

**B. ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED ACTION**

1. **Program Alternatives**

a. **No Action (No Gathering)**

Under the No Action alternative, BLM would not gather wild horses from inside herd management areas. Wild horses would continue to increase in population at a rate of approximately 20 percent annually. Competition between wild horses, wildlife, and livestock for water and forage would increase.

As a long-term approach to wild horse management inside herd management areas, the No Action alternative would be contrary to 43 CFR 4710.3-1 which calls for the establishment of an AML in a herd management area. It would also be contrary to the 1981 District Court decision which requires that all wild horses be removed from checkerboard lands except the number of horses which private landowners agree to allow. Any alternative which would allow "excess" wild horses to remain on the range would violate Federal Regulation and/or the court decision.

The three wild horse herd management areas covered by this EA have been observed over a period of several years (1976-1993). The following recorded observations indicate that wild horse use at uncontrolled levels cause damage to private and public lands. These findings support removal of wild horses to maintain populations at or below the agreed levels, in compliance with the District Court Order.

In the Great Divide Basin wild horse herd management area, over-use by wild horses has been observed at some watering points from year round use.

In the White Mountain wild horse herd management area, utilization of key vegetative species has been below 50 percent over much of the herd area, but heavy utilization (above 60 percent) and signs of excessive trailing were observed in the eastern and southern parts of the Highway Gasson allotment. Water developments, including pits, reservoirs, and pipelines, attract and concentrate large numbers of wild horses, causing overgrazing in the eastern part of the allotment. The number of wild horses in the White Mountain herd management area is above the single number AML for the area and above the lower number in the range.

In the Salt Wells Creek wild horse herd management area, some areas that have seen consistent wild horse concentrations during the growing season appear to be experiencing a downward trend. There are concentrations in the summer on Potter Mountain, Mellor Mountain, Kinney Rim, and Little Basin. Areas in the Salt Wells Creek wild horse herd management area near the Adobe Town herd management area would be high priority for gathering because of resource damage caused, in part, by wild horses moving from the Adobe Town herd management area. Concentrated herds appear to have removed more forage than is desirable under the allotment management plans covering these areas.

The Firehole and North Baxter/Jack Morrow areas, and the Pinedale Resource Area are not herd management areas. Existing land use plans do not call for maintaining and managing viable populations of wild horses in these areas. A No Gathering alternative would not be in conformance with existing land use plans.

The Little Colorado area is also not part of a herd management area. Existing land use plans do not call for maintaining and managing a population of wild horses in that area. An earlier herd management area which included a part of the Little Colorado area (South Desert - Figure Four wild horse herd management area) was eliminated. As part of the decision to eliminate the herd management area, BLM decided to maintain a population of wild horses in the area and to evaluate establishing a new wild horse herd management area in the Green River RMP. A No Gathering alternative would not be in conformance with existing land use plans because it would allow a larger number of horses, than were planned for the South Desert - Figure Four wild horse herd management area, to remain in the area.

Gathering of excess wild horses in an area does not have to take place every year. However, current wild horse numbers in the three wild horse herd management areas are near or above the AML. The number of horses above the AML are considered excess and subject to removal. Some horses strayed into the Firehole area, North Baxter/Jack Morrow area, and Little Colorado areas where existing land use plans do not provide for maintaining populations of wild horses.

The impacts (to the horses) of gathering excess wild horses in later years, using the current AML, would be similar to those for gathering from July 1992 through April 1993. Competition between livestock and horses and wildlife would increase as long as wild horse populations increase. Therefore, a postponement of gathering past 1993/94 would cause more adverse impact to the range condition and thriving ecological balance than the Proposed Action. For the above reasons, neither a No Gathering alternative nor an alternative which would postpone gathering past 1993/94 was analyzed in detail.

Under this alternative (No Gathering), no wild horses would be removed from the Firehole area, North Baxter/Jack Morrow area, or the Pinedale Resource Area. Wild horses would continue to increase at a rate of approximately 20 percent annually. As a long-term approach to wild horse management outside herd management areas, this alternative would be contrary to 43 CFR 4710.4 and to the policy of BLM which is charged with the protection and management of wild and free-roaming horses. For these reasons, the alternative for No Gathering in the Firehole area, North Baxter/Jack Morrow area, and the Pinedale Resource Area is not reasonable and will not be analyzed in detail.

Under this alternative, no wild horses would be gathered from the Little Colorado area. This would result in a situation where the number of wild horses in the area would exceed those allowed in

compliance with the 1981 District Court Order. A viable population of wild horses would be allowed to remain in the area, pending a decision on establishment of a new herd management area which will be analyzed in the ongoing Green River RMP. For these reasons, the alternative of No Gathering in the Little Colorado area is not reasonable and will not be analyzed in detail.

**b. Gather Based on Different Appropriate Management Levels**

The 1981 District Court decision requires BLM to remove all wild horses except that number to which private landowners will agree to allow to remain. The Rock Springs Grazing Association (private landowners), in consultation with a local wild horse interest group, recommended such numbers to BLM. Those numbers are currently the basis for the AMLs in the three herd management areas.

Because those numbers were based, in part, on the rights of private landowners, and were set in compliance with the court order, BLM cannot unilaterally increase the AMLs to allow a larger number of wild horses to remain in the herd management areas. If, based on continued monitoring, resource conditions indicate that a higher AML is appropriate, BLM could decide to seek such a change in the AML by requesting such a change from the private landowners. Monitoring data could indicate sufficient forage does not exist to support present AMLs and they would then need to be reduced accordingly to maintain a thriving ecological balance.

Current resource inventories and monitoring are insufficient to support either an increase or a decrease in the AML in any of the herd management areas. Inventory and monitoring is continuing. The data and information acquired through this continuing process will be analyzed and used to determine if the AMLs should be changed. These changes will be factored into updated Herd Management Plans for the herd management areas.

Wild horse management cannot be based on numbers higher than current AMLs because of the 1981 District Court Order. The IBLA affirmed BLM's decision to gather excess wild horses in 1990, in compliance with the 1981 District Court Order. Existing resource information does not support either an increase or a decrease in the AML numbers. For these reasons, wild horse management for 1993 cannot be based on numbers different from the current AMLs. Therefore, this alternative was not analyzed in detail.

**c. Closure to Livestock**

The herd management areas in the District were established in accordance with 43 CFR 4710.1 and 4710.3. Existing planning decisions provide for maintaining populations of wild horses in these areas and for providing the opportunity for livestock grazing. Closure of herd management areas, or a part of them, to livestock grazing would not be in conformance with existing land use plans. A plan amendment would be needed before such an alternative could be implemented.

The 1981 District Court decision on wild horse management in the Rock Springs District was based, in part, on the rights of private landowners in the checkerboard lands. These lands are unfenced, allowing wild horses to move freely between private and public lands within the "checkerboard lands." If all or parts of the herd management areas were closed to livestock grazing, a substantial amount of fencing would have to be constructed. The substantial cost of such fencing and the potential adverse impacts of the fencing on wildlife make this alternative unreasonable. Therefore, it was not analyzed in detail in this EA.

## **2. Alternative Gathering Methods**

### **a. Water Trapping**

Water trapping, an alternative to gathering as described in Appendix A, involves building traps around key water sources. When the horses come to water the gate is shut manually, mechanically, or electronically.

The method depends on locating the trap in an area where no other water source is available. It is not likely to be successful because there are several water sources available in the areas where wild horses congregate. The number of horses that could be trapped by this method would be fewer than under the Proposed Action and it would be more difficult and more costly to remove excess horses to achieve the AMLs in each of the herd management areas. The alternative would result in little difference in impacts to the horses. For these reasons, this alternative was determined not to be reasonable and it was not analyzed in detail.

### **b. Hay Trapping**

Hay trapping is similar to water trapping except that hay is used for bait instead of water. This method provides more latitude in trap location than does water trapping. To be successful, trapping must be done in the winter when forage is generally scarce. This method is feasible when snow cover confines the horses to lower elevations.

In most areas, snow cover would be sufficient to make this procedure feasible once in every 10 years. This level of snow cover was present in 1992/93, however, access for trap construction and for transporting captured horses was severely limited. The limitations to this method are the time involved and the high cost. Considerable time would be needed to bait the horses into the traps. The number captured would be fewer than under the Proposed Action, making it harder to achieve the appropriate management levels and to comply with the District Court Order (during 1993).

Transportation of the horses to the central holding facility in Rock Springs could be difficult during the winter. The horses could be more adversely affected by winter trapping because their condition is likely to be poor due to shortage of forage.

To trap the necessary numbers, trapping operations would have to extend over several months. This would result in a higher cost per horse captured, as well as a higher potential for injury to the horses because of higher stress and the poorer condition of the horses. This alternative would have no advantage over the Proposed Action. Therefore, it was not analyzed in detail.

### **c. Roundup with Saddle Horses**

This method of capturing horses involves constructing traps in locations where natural barriers and terrain help funnel the horses into the trap. The horses are located and driven into the trap by riders on horseback. The success of this method depends on many factors including, terrain, the nature of the horses being gathered, the distance the horses are driven, the number of riders on the drive, and the skill of the riders.

Trapping operations using this method have not been successful. Terrain and cover in the southern part of the District (Salt Wells Creek wild horse herd management area) are not suitable for this technique. At lower elevations, the terrain does not afford the necessary natural barriers. At mid and high elevations, terrain and the presence of escape cover preclude using this technique.

The risk of injury to riders and saddle horses is high and the stress to which riders must expose their mounts, on occasion, is not humane. This method would require more time for gathering and the costs would be greater than under the Proposed Action. For these reasons, this alternative was determined to be unreasonable and it was not analyzed in detail.

### **C. MONITORING**

A monitoring program is being developed to provide information to support wild horse management decisions. The District Court Order established the AMLs for much of the Rock Springs District. However, to effectively manage wild horses, livestock, and wildlife habitat, information on utilization, actual use, climate, and trend will be monitored. This information will help to set priorities for determining where gathering is most needed to achieve an ecological balance.

The monitoring will be coordinated with the Range Management Program and will follow guidelines in BLM Manual Handbook H-4423-1. The monitoring program will attempt to identify areas of conflict among wild horses, wildlife, and domestic livestock. It will also provide for identifying areas where there is or may be resource damage due to wild horses, including use around riparian areas.

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## CHAPTER III - AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT

### A. INTRODUCTION

The Rock Springs District is in southwest Wyoming. The District includes the Green River Resource Area, where the three wild horse herd management areas, and the Firehole, North Baxter/Jack Morrow, and Little Colorado areas are located. A resource management plan (RMP) is being prepared for the Green River Resource Area (Draft issued 09/17/92).

During the 1992/93 wild horse gathering period (February 26 to April 14) 589 horses were removed. Of this total 24 wild horses were removed from areas outside wild horse herd management areas (i.e., Little Colorado area); 415 wild horses were removed from the Salt Wells Creek herd management area; 37 wild horses were removed from the Great Divide Basin herd management area; and 52 wild horses were removed from the White Mountain herd management area. Spring 1993 gathering (as analyzed in the June 1992 Wild Horse Gathering EA and Decision Record) resumed in late March and ended April 14, 1993. A total of 61 wild horses were gathered. All these horses were removed from the Salt Wells wild horse herd management areas (25 in Little Bitter Creek and 36 from Maxon Ranch).

### B. WILD HORSES

The wild horses that would be affected by the Proposed Action are the estimated 352 to 746 excess wild horses that would be captured and removed from *inside* the three herd management areas. In addition, from *outside* herd management areas, between 20 and 24 horses would be captured and removed from the Fire hole area; between 118 and 142 would be removed from the North Baxter/Jack Morrow area; between 15 and 18 wild horses would be removed from the Pinedale Resource Area (Desert Common Allotment); and between 38 and 69 wild horses would be removed from the Little Colorado area.

The peak foaling period for wild horses is early May to mid-June, though the period ranges from March to September. The foaling period is a critical period for the horses.

Wild horses often develop a social structure in which the animals of a herd divide into bands which are dominated by a lead stallion. The lead animal typically does the majority of the breeding, by driving subordinate males away from the mares. Within an area, bands may develop lead and subordinate roles. This relationship is observable by their behavior at water holes.

The horses' competitive social structure, combined with their size and strength, allows them to dominate water holes and compete favorably with wildlife and domestic livestock. Horses traveling up to 10 miles to water have been noted, although 2- to 5-mile distances are more common. An adult horse normally consumes 10 to 12 gallons of water per day. Horses usually have adequate water from winter snows and spring runoff which fill reservoirs and intermittent streams. During late summer and early fall, horses depend on the fewer perennial sources of water (some reservoirs, streams, springs, and flowing wells) and on wells pumped for domestic livestock and wildlife. Concentrations of wild horses around available water becomes a problem when water is scarce. Horses often become possessive of scarce water, resulting in high competition with livestock and wildlife.

There are four herd management areas (Map 1) in the Rock Springs District. These areas are designated by numbers. Area 4 (Adobe Town herd management area) is not discussed in this EA since it is covered by BLM's Rawlins District.

Estimates for the number of wild horses in the three herd management areas of concern (Map 1) are listed in Table 1. The White Mountain herd management area is Area 1, the Great Divide Basin herd management area is Area 2, and the Salt Wells Creek herd management area is Area 3. The Firehole area is along the Green River, south of I-80. It is south of the White Mountain herd management area and immediately west of U. S. highway 191 adjacent to the Salt Wells Creek herd management area. The appropriate management levels (AMLs) for wild horses in the Great Divide Basin, White Mountain, and Salt Wells Creek herd management area are shown in Table 1.

### **C. DOMESTIC LIVESTOCK AND WILDLIFE**

Most rangelands in the District provide seasonal or yearlong grazing for livestock (cattle, sheep, horses). Approximately 45 percent of the rangelands are public lands which are used in conjunction with State and private lands. The seasons of greatest competition between cattle and wild horses are summer and winter. Wild horse and sheep diets overlap during the winter.

Fencing is generally limited in the District. In some areas, main roads are fenced to prevent livestock (mostly cattle) from entering roadways to reduce safety hazards to motorists. Livestock water is provided by springs, wells, intermittent and ephemeral streams, pipelines, and reservoirs. Sheep use snow in the winter as a water source. There has been a substantial amount of non-use of permitted livestock AUMs in recent years.

Wildlife are an integral part of the environment and provide another important consideration in determining the AML for wild horses in a herd management area. The Rock Springs District provides habitat for a variety of wildlife species, including big game (elk, mule deer, moose, and pronghorn antelope).

There is potential for competition between wild horses and antelope, deer, and moose, however, this potential is generally minimal during all four seasons. The seasons of greatest potential competition between wild horses and elk are fall and winter.

There are some important fisheries in the District. The number and size of perennial drainages limits the number of potentially important fisheries. There is opportunity to enhance some fishery habitat with improved management directed at enhancing riparian ecosystems throughout the District.

### **D. VEGETATION AND SOILS**

Wild horses generally prefer perennial grass species as forage. Shrubs are more important during the fall and winter. The species of grasses preferred depends on the season of the year. Needleandthread grass is most important during the winter and spring and wheatgrass during the summer and fall.

There are a variety of vegetation types in the Rock Springs District where wild horses can be found, both within and outside of wild horse herd management areas. Vegetation types include: sagebrush, saltbush, greasewood, desert shrub, juniper, grass, meadow, broadleaf trees, conifer, mountain shrub,

half shrub and perennial forb, and barren and waste. The predominant vegetation type is sagebrush-grass.

Riparian areas are very important for wild horses, wildlife, and domestic livestock. They generally have deeper, richer loams, higher in organic matter. Natural meadows and cottonwood bottoms are valuable components for all foraging animals (domestic or wild). The communities along stream courses provide food, cover, and water for many species of wildlife. Saline, subirrigated riparian sites have saline or alkaline properties.

Because of the use demands on riparian areas, management considerations have focused on protecting these areas from depletion of both the forage and wildlife. Fencing has been an effective tool in maintaining and improving the qualities of riparian ecosystems.

Since southwest Wyoming is arid, its soils generally lack profile development. As a result, the soils lack structure and are highly susceptible to erosion. In the Green River Resource Area, the soils are predominantly in the order of Entisols and Aridisols.

Soils are dependent on vegetation cover to remain in place and to continue the geologic process of soil development. Vegetation cover prevents raindrops from directly impacting the soil surface and slows runoff and erosion. Major climatic factors affecting soil development include elevation, aspect, precipitation, and the pattern of snow drifts.

Drainages and stream bottoms have accumulated silts and clays in alternate layers of varying texture. These soils are more resistant to wind erosion but are very susceptible to headcutting by water movement.

Varying amounts of soluble salts occur in all the soils. In some soils, the level of soluble salts affects their management (reduced infiltration of water, limitation of nutrient availability, and reduction of water available to plants).

Soil compaction occurs from livestock use and concentrations of other large animals, including wild horses, around water sources. The effects of winter grazing does not impact soils as severely because the soils are frozen. Overland runoff is greater from compacted than from uncompacted soils. The trampling and cutting effects of hooves of grazing animals is most harmful to soils during wet periods.

## **E. LANDS**

Lands in the Green River Resource Area include BLM-administered public land, lands managed by other Federal agencies, State land, and private land. The Green River Resource Area contains a substantial acreage of checkerboard lands (railroad grant lands where private and public land occur in alternating sections for 20 miles on either side of the railroad which crosses Wyoming from east to west). When different colors are used to show land ownership on a map, the map resembles a checkerboard. Lands north and south of the checkerboard are predominantly solid block, BLM-administered public land. There is no fencing between the checkerboard and solid block public lands.

Checkerboard lands create special problems for managing wild horses. A court decision specifically addresses management of these lands. The location of private lands throughout the District affects

wild horse management on public lands, in part, because private lands are not fenced from public lands.

#### **F. RECREATION**

The public enjoys seeing wild horses roaming free in the Rock Springs District. Some people make special trips to areas wild horses are known to frequent. This is especially true of nonresidents and of residents taking nonresident visitors out to see wild horses.

## **CHAPTER IV - ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES**

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

This environmental assessment (EA) focuses on the impacts of the Proposed Action to wild horses, vegetation and soils, domestic livestock, and wildlife. Wildlife, livestock, and wild horses utilize vegetation and affect vegetation cover, soil stability, erosion, and sedimentation.

The following mandatory items and other potential concerns were considered and were determined not to be affected by the Proposed Action:

- Air Quality
- Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACEC)
- Cultural, Historic, and Paleontologic Resources
- Threatened and Endangered Species (T&E species)
- Wilderness Areas and Wilderness Study Areas
- Prime and Unique Farmlands
- Native American Concerns
- Wild and Scenic Rivers
- Sole Source Aquifers
- Hazardous Wastes
- Social and Economic Resources

### **B. WILD HORSES**

The range of 352 to 746 wild horses in the Great Divide Basin, Salt Wells Creek, and White Mountain wild horse herd management areas which would be gathered are above the appropriate management levels for wild horses, and are considered "excess." This range in excess wild horses is based on the projected post-1993 foaling population in relation to the AML range (Table 1). The removal of excess wild horses would benefit the remaining horses by improving the quality and quantity of forage. The 153 to 184 wild horses in the Firehole and North Baxter/Jack Morrow areas and in the Pinedale Resource Area are "excess" because these areas are horse-free areas. The 38 to 69 wild horses which are to be gathered from the Little Colorado area are above the number that would be in compliance with the District Court Order.

Wild horses would be placed under stress as a result of being captured. Some horses may be injured or killed. However, according to past experience, this number would be less than one percent of horses gathered.

The likelihood of mares aborting is lower in summer roundups than during the spring because most foals would already have been born; however, the likelihood of foals becoming separated from their mothers is higher because there would be more foals. Minor injuries are likely to occur. In areas where there is timber overstory, some horses may be roped rather than driven to the trap.

Transporting horses from the trap to the central holding facility would be done in a manner and at a speed that would allow the horses to keep their footing during the trip, minimizing injury during that stage of the operation.

Sorting of horses would be done in the central holding facility. This would reduce stress on the horses. The services of a veterinarian will be available at the central holding facility. Skilled, experienced persons will be involved in the gathering operations and transportation of the horses. One of the objectives of the Capture Plan (Appendix A) is to transport wild horses in a safe and humane manner from the trap to the holding facility.

The horses would not be herded more than seven miles from their area of concentration to the trap. During most of this time, they would be herded at their own pace until they were about 1/4 mile from the trap. These procedures would minimize stress on the animals. When the animals are within 1/4 mile of the trap and approaching the wings of the trap, they would be herded by wranglers on horseback, at a faster pace.

The wings of the traps are generally 100 to 200 yards in length and spaced 100 yards or more apart at their widest point. The wings funnel the horses into the trap. They are held there until they are loaded on trucks to be transported to the central holding facility in Rock Springs. Bands will generally average about 15 head. The number of herding runs conducted in a day would vary depending on the size of the band. Three to five herding runs may be made in a day.

The jute over the wings of the trap would help funnel the horses between the wings of the trap and make the wings more visible to the horses, preventing injury. The horses would see the wings from a sufficient distance to change direction. This would enable them to avoid running into the panels at a relatively high rate of speed.

Captured horses would undergo a life style change but the stress period would not be long. The horse is a relatively adaptable animal and is readily domesticated with proper handling.

### **C. DOMESTIC LIVESTOCK AND WILDLIFE**

If excess wild horses are removed from wild horse herd management areas and from the Firehole area, there would be an improvement in the quality and quantity of forage available for domestic livestock. This would provide greater opportunity for improved livestock distribution. Improved distribution would reduce the amount of utilization on key forage species and allow continuation of authorized livestock use.

The construction of the traps would disturb very little vegetation. The only disturbance would be from the erection of the poles. However, when the horses are herded their hooves would disturb more vegetation than for construction of the traps. Very little disturbance would occur when the horses are herded at their own pace (for most of the distance from their point of concentration to the wings of the trap).

When the wranglers on horseback begin to herd the horses (approximately the last 1/4 mile) and the horses' pace is increased, disturbance to vegetation would increase. This disturbance would be greatest between the wings of the trap. An average band of horses is 15 head. The disturbance would be less than one animal unit month (AUM) per band gathered at each trap. Frequently, more than one run would be made using a trap. The second and subsequent bands or runs would disturb some of the same area disturbed during the first run. Therefore, the disturbance is not directly additive or proportional to the number of runs.

Wildlife populations in areas where excess wild horses are gathered would be disrupted for a short time during the gathering operations. Once gathering operations cease and the gathering crew leave the area, these effects would stop. There would be no long-term adverse effect on wildlife. The short-term effects would be caused by human presence and the noise of the helicopter which would cause wildlife to seek cover in areas adjacent to the gathering routes. It would not cause abandonment of normal habitat areas.

The removal of excess wild horses from inside wild horse herd management areas and from the Firehole North Baxter/Jack Morrow, Little Colorado, and Desert Common areas would enable wildlife populations (deer, antelope, and elk) to utilize the forage that would otherwise be used by the excess number of wild horses. Wildlife populations would be better able to maintain themselves. In some areas, where substantial numbers of wild horses are concentrated, forage and general habitat condition may improve, especially around water sources, after the horses are gathered. This would benefit both game and non-game wildlife.

#### **D. VEGETATION AND SOILS**

The removal of excess wild horses from inside wild horse herd management areas and from the Firehole area would avoid over-utilization of forage and excessive reduction of vegetation ground cover. Vegetation composition, cover, and vigor would improve near water sources where wild horses tend to congregate. An improvement in forage condition could lead to improved livestock distribution, which would prevent over-utilization and reduction in vegetation cover.

Removal of excess wild horses from the three herd management areas and from the Firehole, North Baxter/Jack Morrow, Little Colorado, and Desert Common areas would provide better vegetation cover. Competition between wild horses and livestock, and activity in general around water sources would be reduced. Both quantity and quality of vegetation would be increased. There would be increased production and vigor of vegetation, especially around water sources. The increased vegetation cover would protect the soils and reduce erosion of the productive surface soil layer.

#### **E. LANDS**

Removal of excess wild horses from the three herd management areas and from the Firehole area would reduce or prevent damage (in the form of trampling, compaction, overgrazing, and injury to domestic livestock) from occurring on private, State, and Federal lands not administered by the Bureau of Land Management. It would also reduce or prevent similar conflicts between wild horses and wildlife on these non-BLM administered lands.

#### **F. RECREATION**

After gathering, the public would continue to have the opportunity to view wild horses in the wild horse herd management areas as they have for the past several years. There would no longer be wild horses in the Firehole area or in the Pinedale Resource Area. A population of wild horses would continue to remain in the Little Colorado area, pending completion of the Green River RMP.

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## CHAPTER V - CONSULTATION AND COORDINATION

### A. INTRODUCTION

#### 1. General

The BLM is responsible for the welfare of wild horses and is under constant scrutiny by many members of the public for actions concerning wild horse management and gathering (Appendix A).

Wild horse gathering in the Rock Springs District was suspended in the late Summer and Fall of 1989. Gathering of wild horses outside wild horse herd management areas resumed in March of 1990, following preparation of an environmental assessment (EA) covering the gathering of wild horses outside wild horse herd management areas. Gathering of excess wild horses from inside herd management areas began in the Summer 1990, following preparation of a second EA. The Decision on the second EA was appealed to IBLA and gathering was stopped. IBLA issued an order affirming the BLM decision, in part, and placed it into full force and effect. Gathering resumed on February 26, 1991 under the same procedures and gathering plan, based on the same numbers of excess wild horses.

The IBLA, on February 22, 1991, affirmed the BLM decisions to gather wild horses according to the 1990 EA. They stated that the EA "sets out the agreed upon management "levels" and, consistent with the agreement, the EA and plans covering the Green River Resource Area (which encompasses the three WHHMA's and the Firehole area) seeks to maintain those levels." The issue of "AML's of wild horses and what constitutes "excess," has been determined with finality by the District Court Orders." Horses were gathered in 1992/93 under the Decision Record of EA number WY-040-EA2-03.

The IBLA decision recognized the BLM's approach to using AMLs from the Court Order to establish AMLs for herd management areas that include checkerboard lands. The IBLA Order states, "BLM charges that API and WHOA fail to recognize that, because of the migratory nature of the herds, the checkerboard ruling affects both solid block lands and checkerboard lands.... BLM notes that the boundaries of the White Mountain, Great Divide Basin, and Salt Wells Creek WHHMA's, circumscribing the territorial limits of the affected herds, had not been determined at the time of the 1979 litigation. Noting that the boundary between the solid block lands and the checkerboard lands within the WHHMA's is unfenced, BLM contends that establishing the AML's within the checkerboard also establishes the AML's for all lands within the WHHMA's incorporating the checkerboard lands. BLM insists that appellants (ignore) \* \* \* the complex land ownership pattern in the area occupied by these herds. Neither the public lands nor the private lands can be managed independently of the other in the unfenced range of the Rock Springs District."

This EA covers the period beginning July 1993 (after 1993 foaling) through spring gathering in April 1994. It takes into account the February 1993 inventory and bases estimates of the number of excess wild horses on more current population figures.

#### 2. Checkerboard Lands (Rock Springs Grazing Association)

The Green River Resource Area contains a substantial acreage of "checkerboard" lands. Slightly less than 50 percent of these lands are BLM-administered public lands and 50 percent are private lands controlled by the Rock Springs Grazing Association (RSGA). Horses may move seasonally from solid block public land to checkerboard land.

In September 1979, the RSGA and the Mountain States Legal Foundation brought suit against the Department of the Interior, charging improper management of wild horses contrary to the provisions of the Wild Free-Roaming Horses and Burros Act. They charged that improper management "led to an excessive number of horses, which is causing severe damage to the private property of plaintiff Rock Springs Grazing Association, as well as to the public lands in the Rock Springs District."

In January 1979, the RSGA met with representatives of Wild Horses Yes and the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros. The purpose of the meeting was to try to establish mutually agreeable numbers for the wild horse population (appropriate management levels) in the area of concern.

The RSGA and the International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros informed BLM of the results of the meeting. Wild horse numbers to be maintained were agreed as follows:

300 horses on RSGA lands north of I-80 from the Green River east to the District boundary,

300 horses in the area west of Highway 187 (now 191), to the District boundary north of the RSGA lands, extending into District #5 (Pinedale Resource Area),

400 horses north of the checkerboard area and east of Highway 187 (now 191) to the District boundary on the east,

200 horses south of the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way east of Green River to the east District boundary on checkerboard lands, and

400 horses east of the Green River and south of the checkerboard lands to the east district boundary.

The RSGA said they recognized that horse numbers on checkerboard lands may be greater during extreme winters due to horses moving onto traditional winter range (checkerboard lands) from solid block public lands to the north. They asked that emphasis be placed on removing excess wild horses when numbers substantially exceed the agreed numbers. The RSGA understands that there may be seasonal increases.

In March 1981, the District Court ordered BLM to "remove all wild horses from the checkerboard grazing lands in the Rock Springs District except that number which the Rock Springs Grazing Association voluntarily agrees to leave in said area."

In March 1981, the District Court ordered that appropriate level for horse herds on the Salt Wells/Pilot Butte checkerboard lands is the level agreed to by the landowners and that all horses above such levels are excess within the meaning of the Act. The District Court ordered that the management level for horses in the Sandy area (approximately the former Big Sandy Resource Area in the northern part of the Green River Resource Area) is 825 animals.

A 1990 EA covering gathering excess wild horses in the three herd management areas and in the Firehole area was appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA). On July 27, 1990, the IBLA affirmed BLM's decision to gather excess wild horses, in part. The BLM's May 29, 1990, decision to gather excess wild horses was placed into full force and effect, to the extent that it is

applicable to the areas described in the 1981 District Court Order. The IBLA asked appellants for additional reasons why the decision should not be affirmed. On February 22, 1991, the IBLA affirmed the BLM decision to gather wild horses in the herd management areas as described in the 1990 EA. The decision found that the plans for gathering wild horses and the AMLs used were in compliance with the District Court Order.

On January 23, 1991, a public hearing covering the use of helicopters was held in Rock Springs. Immediately prior to the hearing there was a public meeting as part of the public participation effort to inform the public about the wild horse program and the status of appeals to previous decisions. An opportunity to discuss concerns and question BLM staff was also provided. It was pointed out that stating one's views on the use of helicopters during this earlier opportunity should not be viewed as a substitute for stating them formally during the public hearing portion of the program.

The public meeting part of the program provided information to the public and to encouraged interchange between BLM and the public. During the public hearing, one individual testified that there may be other alternatives to limiting wild horse populations to appropriate numbers and that gathering using helicopters may result in mortality. It was pointed out by another member of the public that the mortality for horses was very low and fully within acceptable limits. Mortality has been less than one percent over the past several years.

On January 29, 1992, a public meeting/hearing was again held to inform the public about the wild horse program and the use of helicopter in the gathering of wild horses. Opportunity was provided the public to discuss concerns and question BLM staff. The public was also informed of BLM plans to implement a program called the "Strategic Plan For Management Of Wild Horses On Public Lands" which includes wild horse selective removal. This program would entail the return of horses over 10 years old, for which no adoption demand exists, to the herd management areas in lieu of holding them in sanctuaries or long-term holding facilities. Beginning in 1993, BLM may begin implementation of this program in some herd management areas. This would include selective removal and implementation of fertility control procedures on some horses after they have been tested and approved for use.

On March 11, 1993, a public meeting/hearing was again held to inform the public about the wild horse program and the use of helicopters in the gathering of wild horses. An update on the Draft Green River Resource Management Plan was also presented. One member of the public chose to speak and stated that he felt the use of the helicopter to gather wild horses was the most humane method available.

## **B. DISTRIBUTION**

This EA, FONSI, and Decision Record (DR) will be distributed to the public. A press release will be issued in the local media informing the public that the EA had been prepared, that a finding of no significant impact was concluded and a decision made to continue the wild horse gathering program as proposed. The EA will not be made available for a 30-day public comment period because the BLM feels there are no unresolved conflicts. Conflicts/issues that had existed had all been resolved in the IBLA Orders of July 27, 1990 and February 22, 1991. The DR is subject to appeal as provided in 43 CFR 4770.3 and 43 CFR 4.4. The EA, FONSI, and DR are available at Green River Resource Area Office and the Rock Springs District Office in Rock Springs, and in the Wyoming State Office in Cheyenne. The EA, FONSI, and DR will be distributed to organizations and individuals, including:

### Federal

U.S. Senator Alan Simpson  
U.S. Senator Malcolm Wallop  
U.S. Representative Craig Thomas  
Bureau of Land Management, Grazing Advisory Board Members  
Bureau of Land Management, Multiple Use Advisory Council Members  
Bureau of Land Management, Wild Horse & Burro National Program Office

### State of Wyoming

Planning Coordinator/Clearinghouse  
Game and Fish Department

### Organizations

American Humane Association  
Animal Protection Institute  
Casper Star-Tribune  
Colorado State University Library  
Defenders of Wildlife  
Friends of Wild Wyoming Deserts  
Home Petroleum Corp.  
Humane Society of the United States  
International Society for the Protection of Mustangs and Burros  
International Society of Wild Horses and Burros  
Law Firm of Marty & Ragsdale  
Lincoln County Historical Society  
National Audobon Society  
National Wildlife Federation  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
Rock Springs Grazing Association  
Rocket Miner Newspaper  
Sierra Club  
Sierra Club Legal Defense Fund  
Society for Range Management  
Sweetwater Farm Bureau  
Sweetwater Wildlife Association  
Uinta Development Co.  
University of Wyoming, Agricultural Extension Service  
University of Wyoming, Department of Range Management  
Vulcan Materials Co.  
WHOA  
Wild Horses Yes  
Wyoming Advocates for Animals  
Wyoming Outfitters Association  
Wyoming Public Lands Council  
Wyoming Wildlife Federation  
Wyoming Wood Products  
Wyoming Wool Growers Association

**Individuals**

Albern, Sherri  
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Jensen, Jolene  
Kenney, Steve  
Loper, Dick  
Plant, Chris  
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## GLOSSARY

**APPROPRIATE MANAGEMENT LEVEL (AML):** The optimum number of wild horses that provides a thriving natural ecological balance on the public range.

**BAND:** A group of wild horses running together or a lone wild horse.

**CHECKERBOARD LANDS:** Lands on both sides of the Union Pacific Railroad (running in an east-west direction across the district) where alternating sections are public and private lands. When different colors are used to show the land ownership in the area on a map, the map resembles a checkerboard.

**EXCESS WILD HORSES:** Wild free-roaming horses which have been removed from public lands or which must be removed to preserve and maintain a thriving ecological balance and multiple-use relationship.

**THRIVING NATURAL ECOLOGICAL BALANCE:** The condition of the public range that exists when resource objectives related to wild horses in approved land use and/or activity plans have been achieved.

**WILD HORSE HERD MANAGEMENT AREA:** A designated area where a viable population of wild horses is to be maintained. An appropriate management level for wild horses is established to manage the wild horses on the public rangelands.

## ACRONYMS

|       |                                                        |
|-------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| AML   | Appropriate Management Level                           |
| API   | Animal Protection Institute                            |
| BLM   | Bureau of Land Management                              |
| CFR   | Code of Federal Regulations                            |
| DR    | Decision Record                                        |
| EA    | Environmental Assessment                               |
| FONSI | Finding of No Significant Impact                       |
| IBLA  | Interior Board of Land Appeals                         |
| MFP   | Management Framework Plan (earlier BLM land use plans) |
| RMP   | Resource Management Plan (current BLM land use plans)  |
| RSGA  | Rock Springs Grazing Association                       |
| WHHMA | Wild Horse Herd Management Area                        |

## **APPENDIX A**

### **WILD HORSE CAPTURE PLAN (1993/1994)**

#### **ROCK SPRINGS DISTRICT, WYOMING**

Great Divide Basin, Salt Wells Creek & White Mountain WHHMA  
and  
Firehole, North Baxter/Jack Morrow, Pinedale Resource Area and Little Colorado Areas  
(*outside* WHHMA)

#### **I. Purpose**

The purpose of this plan is to establish an approach for gathering and removal of from 352 to 746 excess wild horses from *inside* three wild horse herd management areas; and, from four areas located *outside* wild horse herd management areas, gather and remove 20 to 24 excess wild horses from the Firehole area (west of the Salt Wells Creek wild horse herd management area and east of Flaming Gorge Reservoir); from 118 to 142 excess wild horses from the North Baxter/Jack Morrow area; from 15 to 18 excess wild horses from the Pinedale Resource Area; and from 38 to 69 excess wild horses from the Little Colorado area.

The three wild horse herd management areas where gathering will take place are: Great Divide Basin, White Mountain, and Salt Wells Creek. Exact numbers of horses gathered from each area will depend on the numbers of foals produced during the 1993 foaling season. Gathering will begin in the Green River Resource Area, Rock Springs District, Wyoming, during the summer and fall of 1993 and the Spring of 1994.

The number of excess wild horses that would be subject to gathering beginning in July 1993, would depend in part, on the number of excess wild horses gathered during the Spring 1994 gathering operations. The estimated number of wild horses subject to gathering can generally be reduced by the number of wild horses gathered during the Spring of 1993 (i.e., 61 horses).

The gathering techniques described may be used to gather any wild horses that stray onto private lands, when a request to remove the horses is received from the private landowner, in accordance with Section 4 of the Act.

#### **II. Land Use Plan Conformance**

The gathering and processing of wild horses from the three herd management areas (Great Divide Basin, White Mountain, and Salt Wells Creek), from the Firehole, North Baxter/Jack Morrow, and Little Colorado areas is in conformance with the Big Sandy and Salt Wells Management Framework Plans (MFPs). These two former resource areas are now part of the Green River Resource Area.

### **III. Actions**

- A. Established trap sites will be used from year to year. New trap sites will be established as deemed appropriate. All trap sites will be surveyed for cultural values, and endangered, threatened, or sensitive plants and animals before the trap is constructed.**
- B. Gather and remove from 352 to 746 excess wild horses from three herd management areas, in accordance with 43 CFR 4710.4. Up to 208 wild horses would be removed from the Great Divide Basin WHHMA, from 59 to 154 wild horses would be removed from the White Mountain WHHMA; and from 270 to 384 wild horses would be removed from the Salt Wells Creek WHHMA.**
- C. Gather and remove from 20 to 24 excess wild horses from the Firehole area, in accordance with 43 CFR 4710.4.**
- D. Gather and remove from 118 to 142 excess wild horses from the North Baxter/Jack Morrow area, in accordance with 43 CFR 4710.4.**
- E. Gather and remove from 38 to 69 excess wild horses from the Little Colorado area, in accordance with 43 CFR 4710.4.**
- F. Gather and remove from 15 to 18 excess wild horses from the Pinedale Resource Area, in accordance with 43 CFR 4710.4.**
- G. Remove horses according to guidelines in existing herd management areas (by age and sex). Return outstanding and unadoptable individuals to the herd management area. Implement selective removal criteria outlined in BLM "Strategic Plan For Management Of Wild Horses On Public Lands." This program would entail the return of horses over 10 years old, for which no adoption demand exists, to the herd management areas in lieu of holding them in sanctuaries or long term holding facilities.**
- H. Relocate horses near the periphery of wild horse herd management areas, or from problem areas in the herd management area, to other areas in the herd management area.**
- I. Upon request, gather and remove wild horses from private lands except where agreements exist to allow specified numbers of use.**
- J. Transport gathered wild horses from trap sites to the central holding facility in a safe and humane manner, including limiting the speeds of the truck to allow horses to more easily maintain their balance.**
- K. Provide for disposition of horses that are branded or claimed.**
- L. Provide for humane destruction of severely injured, old, sick, or lame animals and the disposition of their remains.**

#### IV. Plan for Gathering and Removal

Gathering will begin during July 1993, only after the critical foaling period.

##### A. Great Divide Basin

The Great Divide Basin wild horse herd management area is area 2 on Map 1. It covers approximately 779,000 acres which includes the Red Desert Basin north of Interstate 80.

The southern 75 percent of the herd management area has I-80 as its southern boundary and is comprised mostly of unfenced "checkerboard" lands. The northern 25 percent of the herd management area is comprised mostly of solid block public lands with minor amounts of intermingled State and private lands. The northern boundary of the herd management area along the Sweetwater River is fenced. The western boundary of the herd management area is the unfenced west branch of the Continental Divide. The eastern boundary is the fenced boundary between the BLM's Rock Springs and Rawlins Districts.

The appropriate management level (AML) for wild horses in the Great Divide Basin wild horse herd management area, agreed to by private landowners, is set at 500 horses (415 - 600). The BLM conducted aerial monitoring during January and February 1993 and counted 519 wild horses in the herd management area. After the 1993 foaling season, the population is projected to be approximately 623 head. Therefore, from 23 to 208 excess wild horses will be gathered in this area. Exact locations of traps will depend, in part, on where the horses are when gathering is conducted. Captured unadoptable horses will be returned to this area in accordance with the BLM long range strategic plan.

Trap locations expected to be used are: 12-mile (SE1/4, section 28, T. 22 N., R. 100 W.) and Rasmussen (NW1/4, section 17 T. 24 N., R. 98 W.). The 12-mile trap is on checkerboard lands. The Rasmussen trap is north of the checkerboard lands. Other portable traps may be used, if horses are concentrated in other areas at the time of gathering. Targeted horse concentrations are in the Bar X, Desert Springs and Black Rock subunits.

##### B. Salt Wells Creek

The Fort LaClède and Titsworth Gap areas are where gathering operations will be concentrated. The Salt Wells Creek herd management area covers approximately 1,193,000 acres south of Interstate 80. The Salt Wells Creek herd management area is area 3 on Map 1.

The BLM counted 529 wild horses in this area during January and February 1993. After the 1993 foaling season, the population is projected to be approximately 635 head. Therefore, from 270 to 384 excess wild horses will be gathered in this area. Captured unadoptable horses will be returned to this area in accordance with the BLM long range strategic plan.

The traps to be used will be the Fort LaClède Trap (Section 23, T. 17 N., R. 97 W.), Fort LaClède #2 trap (SE1/4, section 17, T. 16 N., R. 97 W.), and Haystack trap (section 27, T. 17 N., R. 96 W.) in the Fort LaClède subunit. In the Titsworth Gap subunit, traps to be used may include the Titsworth Gap trap (T. 15 N., R. 104 W., Section 23), the Gap Creek trap (T.

14 N., R. 103 W., Section 31) and the Elk Butte trap (T. 14 N., R. 102 W., Section 7). Other portable traps may be used, if horses are concentrated in other areas at the time of gathering.

#### C. White Mountain

The White Mountain wild horse herd management area is Area 1 on Map 1. It covers approximately 393,000 acres. It is a prime wild horse viewing area since the horses are readily seen from Highway 191. The southern two-thirds of the herd management area contains a large portion of checkerboard lands. The northern portion of the herd management area is primarily solid block public lands bordering the Eden Valley irrigation project (which along with the Big Sandy River, forms the northern boundary of the herd management area).

The wild horse population in this herd management area has been maintained at the agreed appropriate management level of 250 since 1981. Selective roundups have been conducted since that time to maintain the wild horse population within the appropriate management level. Selective roundups will be continued in the area.

Wild horses will be selected for removal based on additional criteria of color, conformation, and disposition. Several wild horses with appaloosa or flaxen mane characteristics are present and will be returned to the range. Wild horses with severely deformed features or possessing a bad disposition will be removed.

During the January and February 1993 inventory, 299 wild horses were counted in the White Mountain herd management area. After the 1993 foaling season, it is projected there will be approximately 359 wild horses in the herd management area. Therefore, from 109 to 154 excess wild horses may be removed from the herd management area. Captured unadoptable horses will be returned to this area in accordance with the BLM long range strategic plan.

#### D. Firehole Area

The Firehole area is outside wild horse herd management areas. It is south of the White Mountain herd management area and immediately west of the Aspen Mountain portion of the Salt Wells Creek herd management area. The area is bounded on the west by the Flaming Gorge reservoir, on the east by the unfenced Highway 191, on the north by Interstate 80, and on the south by the Utah State line. The area is predominantly on checkerboard lands.

Based on the January and February 1993 inventory, there are 20 horses currently in the area. The January and February inventory counted 529 horses in the Salt Wells Creek wild horse herd management area, which is well above the 365 head level agreed with private landowners. Therefore, horses will not be relocated from the Firehole area into the Salt Wells Creek herd management area, with the possible exception of outstanding individuals. After 1993 foaling, the wild horse population in the area is projected to be 24 head. Total removal of all wild horses from the Firehole area will be attempted. This would remove from 20 to 24 excess wild horses from the Firehole area.

Portable traps will be used in this area. The traps will be located no further than seven miles from the location of the horses. The most likely trap location is in T. 16 N., R. 106 W., in Sweetwater County, Wyoming.

**E. North Baxter/Jack Morrow Area**

The North Baxter/Jack Morrow area is outside any wild horse herd management areas. It lies north of Interstate 80 and is bounded on the west by Highway 191 and on the east by the western boundary of the Great Divide Basin wild horse herd management area. The Great Divide Basin herd management area is currently above the appropriate management level; therefore, the excess wild horses removed from the North Baxter/Jack Morrow area could not be moved into the adjacent herd management area. The January and February 1993 inventory counted 118 wild horses in this area. After 1993 foaling, the wild horse population in the area is projected to be 142 head. Total removal of all wild horses from the North Baxter/Jack Morrow area will be attempted. From 118 to 142 excess wild horses will be removed from the North Baxter/Jack Morrow area.

**F. Pinedale Resource Area**

The Pinedale RMP determined that the South Desert Pasture of the Desert Common Allotment in the Pinedale Resource Area would no longer be managed as a wild horse herd management area. Therefore, all wild horses in this horse-free area are determined to be excess and subject to removal. The January and February 1993 inventory counted 15 wild horses in this area. After 1993 foaling, the wild horse population in the area is projected to be 18 head. Total removal of all wild horses from the Pinedale Resource Area will be attempted. This would remove from 15 to 18 excess wild horses from the Pinedale Resource Area.

**G. Little Colorado Area**

The Little Colorado area is outside any wild horse herd management area. It is an area south of the previously existing South Desert - Figure Four herd management area. While none of this area is currently in a herd management area, a population of wild horses (from 69 to 100 head) will be maintained there pending completion of the Green River RMP and a decision on whether a new herd management area should be established. The January and February 1993 inventory counted 115 wild horses in this area. After 1993 foaling, the wild horse population in the area is projected to be 138 head. From 38 to 69 excess wild horses will be removed from the Little Colorado area. Captured unadoptable horses will be returned to this area in accordance with the BLM long range strategic plan.

**V. Method of Removal**

**A. Helicopter/Horseback**

Herding will be done by using a helicopter (Hiller 12E Soloy). Helicopter payment will not be based on gathering speed or the number of horses captured per day. Animal welfare will have priority over these factors. Generally, helicopter herding will be done early in the day when temperatures are lower which is easier on the horses.

Three to four BLM wranglers will be on horseback at each trap. Working as a team, the helicopter will guide the wild horses into the wings of the trap, or as close to the wings as possible. Then the wranglers will get behind the horses and chase them into the trap, with the aid of the helicopter.

The wings of the trap will generally be 100 to 200 yards long, depending on terrain. They would generally be 100 yards or wider apart at their widest point and would narrow, funneling the horses into the trap.

**B. Roping**

Colts and mothers may become separated or escape during capture. In these cases, the escaped colt or mother will be roped to keep the colt from becoming orphaned. Only horses that must be captured individually will be roped.

**C. Humane Treatment of Wild Horses**

Every reasonable precaution will be taken to ensure the safety of the wild horses and to keep stress to the animals at a minimum.

**D. Herding**

Wild horses will not be herded over a 7-mile distance from the trap. The horses will be moved at their own pace, to within 1/4 mile of the wings of the trap. At this point, the speed of herding will be increased by the wranglers. Bands of horses will generally average about 15 head. The number of gathering runs per day will depend on the number of horses and the size of the bands. Up to five runs per day may be completed.

**E. Care at the Trap**

The daily capture will not exceed the number of wild horses that can be transported to the central holding facility in a day (generally 45 to 50 head). No wild horses will be left at a trap site overnight.

**F. Transporting**

1. Transport time from the trap to the central holding facility will not exceed six hours.
2. Double-deck trucks will not be used at trap sites.
3. Wild horses will not be loaded tightly into the trucks for transport. Generally, the loading rate is a maximum of 10 horses per compartment in a semi-trailer and 14 head on a stock truck. This allows for movement and allows an animal which may go down adequate room to regain its footing.
4. Pens at the central holding facility will be stocked with adequate feed and water prior to the arrival of the horses. Horses will be unloaded and left undisturbed in the corrals at the central holding facility, typically from mid-afternoon until they are processed the following morning.

## G. Trap Construction

### 1. Pens

Steel corral panels (portable) will be used to erect a basic three-pen trap. These panels are six feet high. Pens will hold up to 20 horses each. Generally, a 6-panel pen will be used to contain the horses.

### 2. Wings

Steel posts and jute matting will be used to erect the wings of the trap, usually two wings per trap. The steel posts, when set, are six feet high and spaced approximately 15 to 20 feet apart. The jute matting hangs off the posts to provide a visible barrier. No wire will be used, except when an existing fence is used as one of the wings of the trap.

### 3. Loading

A Powder River loading chute with rubber belting will be used on all loading operations.

### 4. Existing Trap Locations

In many cases, trap locations have been used previously. Trap construction will be as described above. The 12-mile trap uses a previously constructed area of approximately five acres, where the horses are first contained. They are then herded by wranglers on horseback into the trap area. There is a permanent wood loading chute at this trap which may be used.

## H. Personnel and Equipment

### 1. Government Employees

There will be one wrangler foreman, three wranglers, and one truck driver on most roundups. Occasionally, there will be one fewer wrangler. Some situations may call for additional personnel.

### 2. Contract

The helicopter will be on contract to the BLM. A new contract has been issued for the 1993-94 gathering year. The contractor will provide one fuel truck and driver. Contract payment would be based on flight hours, not on number of horses gathered.

### 3. Equipment

A semi-tractor and straight trailer with a capacity of 30 to 33 horses will be used. A stock truck, with a maximum of 14 head, will also be used. A one-

ton flatbed truck and two-compartment 26-foot horse trailer can haul four saddle horses and up to six separated wild horses. This equipment will be used on most roundups. Other equipment will be available, as needed.

**I. Destruction of Animals**

Any wild horse requiring destruction, as determined by the officer in charge, will be destroyed immediately using the most humane method possible. This is usually one 30-caliber bullet to the brain. The remains will be disposed of either by burial or by removal from the immediate area and leaving the remains to the environment.

**J. Branded and Claimed Horses**

Branded and claimed horses will be transported to the central holding facility in Rock Springs. Upon notification, the State Brand Inspector will determine the owners and will make the necessary arrangements to return the animals or to dispose of them under the State of Wyoming estray laws.

**K. Selective Removal**

BLM plans to implement a program called the "Strategic Plan For Management Of Wild Horses On Public Lands" which includes wild horse selective removal. This program would entail the return of horses over 10 years old, for which no adoption demand exists, to the herd management areas in lieu of holding them in sanctuaries or long term holding facilities. Beginning in 1993, BLM will begin implementation of this program in some WHHMA's. This would include selective removal and implementation of fertility control procedures on some horses after they have been tested and approved for use.

**L. Public Interest**

A veterinarian will not be at the trap sites. A veterinarian will be available at the central holding facility when the horses arrive. The horses are normally inspected by a veterinarian when processed, the day after capture.

Interest groups will be notified of any changes, in accordance with this plan and wild horse program regulations.

There may be filming by professional film crews and photographers at trap sites. The District Public Affairs Specialist or other BLM employees will assist in the control of these groups to ensure that they do not add unnecessary stress to the horses or interfere with the gathering operations. Other requests will be considered as they are received. All media and other visitors will be accompanied by a knowledgeable BLM employee.

**M. Safety**

All Rock Springs District wild horse gathering safety procedures will be followed.

Aviation special use plan and U.S. Department of the Interior Office of Aircraft Service (OAS) Operational Procedures Memoranda will be followed.

Passengers will not be allowed in the helicopter during gathering. However, BLM personnel may be allowed as flight crew to monitor gathering operations.

END

4-28-94